Spring 1949

# OUTPOSTS

## 13

*Poems, Articles and Reviews*

JOHN PUDNEY
CLIFFORD DYMENT
VERNON WATKINS
PHOEBE HESKETH
HENRY TREECE
PAUL DEHN
ROBERT THOMAS MOORE
ERNEST FROST
W. J. STRACHAN
JUAN RODOLFO WILCOCK
JOAN QUAYLE
ERIC NIXON
JUDAH M. TURKAT

PATRICK ORPEN DUDGEON
JOHN BAYLISS
B. EVAN OWEN
LIONEL MONTEITH
MICHAEL REDGROVE
MAURICE CARPENTER
ELLODE COLLINS
JOSEPH JOEL KEITH
MURIEL SPARK
JOHN WAIN
MARGARET CROSLAND
CHARLES ORWELL
MADGE HALES

*Notices, etc.*

# *OUTPOSTS Number 13 (Spring 1949)*

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# EDITORIAL

READERS will, no doubt, be pleasantly surprised to find a substantial increase in the size of OUTPOSTS. This is an example of what can be accomplished through the willing co-operation and assistance of those who approve of the objects which we set out to achieve with our first issue in February, 1944, and we wish to thank all our subscribers to whom the credit for the latest improvement is due. The benefit of any further increase in circulation will be passed on in a similar manner. Like other magazines, OUTPOSTS has had its difficulties, but it has been a constant source of encouragement to us to receive, from all parts of the world, letters of congratulation upon the standards we have maintained. May we suggest that another (and a practical) way of expressing appreciation would be for every subscriber to introduce at least one new reader during 1949.

The extra pages will widen our scope by enabling us to print more and longer poems, and to devote more space to critical articles, essays and reviews. In addition to the assessment of contemporary work and the study of particular aspects of poetry, we intend to give closer attention to the inter-relationship of the various forms of art (see *Poetry and Painting* in this issue) and the development of regional culture.

We believe, with Mr. T. S. Eliot, that " if culture is to flourish in the metropolis, it must flourish in every village," yet it must be emphasised that the revitalized regionalism we advocate is not a redirection to an obsolete past, but a vision of the future in which a balanced life in every community has become a contribution to local dignity and even to international patterns of thought, belief and behaviour. We shall, therefore, encourage the formation of regional groups for the study and enjoyment of poetry, and we shall be glad to give publicity to the activities of groups already in existence.

While publishing the best work available, we shall continue to take special interest in the work of new and unestablished poets, irrespective of form or technique. Contributions from other countries will be welcomed as part of our policy in promoting a wider exchange of ideas. Three of the contributors to this issue, Judah M. Turkat, Joseph Joel Keith, and Robert Thomas Moore, are American poets. The poem by Juan Rodolfo Wilcock, of Argentina, is from *Ensayos de Poesía Lírica* (Essays in Lyric Poetry), 1945, and has been translated by Patrick Orpen Dudgeon, editor of *English Folios*. Acknowledgment is due to John Lane the Bodley Head for the poem *Silences* which, since acceptance for OUTPOSTS, has appeared in John Pudney's latest volume, *Commemorations* (1948).

## JOHN PUDNEY

### *Silences*

THERE are other silences than those
Of death, the blown rose:
Other ways
Of calculating days
Than at their close.

Enormous silences there are,
Of love or of the star
Of hovered thought
Where the dark dizzy eye is brought
To see afar.

All our silences will never gain
The better of pain:
Or with loss
Unhang Christ from the Cross,
Or hold loss vain.

## W. J. STRACHAN

### *In Clear-Cut Planes*

IN clear-cut planes the eye finds satisfaction,
The rock hardness of the edgy stones,
That weight the shore, the contours of these bones
Scoured clean and whitened by the waves' action;

Comfort in the roundness of a pebble
That centuries went to form, a fossil shell
Ribbed and resistant to the constant swell,
So old that time is imperceptible;

Solace in the softness of the idle
Weed that lifts and sways to the tides' surges,
Renewing life in rock-pools it submerges
And in ourselves as we stand by the earth's cradle.

## ERNEST FROST

### *The Death in Rome*

(John Keats : Feb. 23rd, 1821)

IT seemed a death like a day too soon with summer,
a day of sudden chill which crinkled flowers
and set red braziers in the evening streets.
This was the season of the invalids, the short bright play
of sunlight on the Tiber, the evening going cold
from summer halted on the doorstep.

It seemed
not so much death, but someone running down the steps
outside the house, running towards the city
under the grave church like cruets on a table
and the table set serenely in its colours
waiting for bells and wine and winter food.

The too-early spring had caught you where you looked
lovingly into it, beyond the fondant brightness to the leaves
where Cressida was. Turning then, you saw
the sun and stones go cold, and the day pour
itself away like a tilted glass. And leaning,
how you drank it! How it tore at you, the sweet mist
becoming poisonous! *Beauty is freedom*, so you might have said,
*we all must die for being free, and beauty—*
*beauty kills us as it killed Cressida.*

Your room reached out into a branch of leaves
down which the sun explored. Shadow moving from shadow
down to the cold red houses and the broken roofs,
and finding you in evening, the one last shadow,
the perfect shade, the happiest of all.

Consider, poet, the other shadows. Consider the green
Walthamstow against the robin-breasted Rome,
the smoke and wine and the dark, sudden people
whom you never knew. And consider, heir to this all,

the shadow moving from the mountain side : the strolling
player
who kissed Cressida, marching down falls
of stairs from the Spanish Church ; the scenery for dying
like a cruel theatre of steps and starts, of a sour Illyria
set in the heart of a stone. Consider it all
as the lyre considers the dead musician.

And if you died, like the impact of famine,
famine was shaped like ice, like the winter moon,
and your rich corn went black for the night ; and black
it goes now in a later day, when the stairs rumble
with our traffic of fear, and the city wrings its hands
while the flags hang heavy and black.

But this afternoon, as early with summer as you
with your summer strapped to you like an illness, the way
the sun rots over Italy, the way the sky peels
its blue enamelling, turns the square cold again
and the traffic to a mutter and then still. The way
of this winter afternoon is the sudden gentleness
of your voice in a daydream of what is real
and what was never ours.

Cressida was a beggar, and you were lost in a dream
which heard the dice in the room below.
And the fountain at the Villa Medici along the road
is a beggar too, a tapping white caduceus
of the leper, who warns how dangerous water is
for the name's glory, and how the amulet of a star
is perhaps all we can ever wear. *The reward,*
sang the water, *is the way beggars die ;*
*the shadow marching down the steps into the eyes.*

This afternoon the square has rested to allow the thought
of dispossession to walk through. The green cabs have stopped
their spider motions on the golden floor. The Janiculan
is as still as yellow pears on a wall. The domes and roofs
whirl no more, and a cold mauve creeps into spring,
returning it to winter. Lie still.
Lie perfect as the poem, as the cold hyacinths
which decorate these streets. Lie where
the star you took down from your voyaging
is the jewel a beggar bears to the ragged Cressida.
Lie in our bitter time, still warm, still free.

## JOAN QUAYLE

### *Hands*

THE man's hands to the woman are
Witness of his accomplishment
And the accumulated strength behind
Breaking of bonds and building destinies.
Sinew and bone to her flesh and blood, they bend
The stuff of life to subordination, yet
They draw her to him that she may augment
In him his full achievement by her own.

Beautiful are her hands, and sure
In the performance of his pleasure. Skilled
Are her fingertips to find the pulse
Which lies quiescent for her quickening;
Hands which unroll his wider horizons
And trace the patterns he will execute,
Sustaining him, or seeking his in ease,
Locked in the silent eloquence of love.

Proceeding from the flesh, cathedrals rise
In massy challenge to the infinite,
And over the wide parishes of man
Spires point immobile fingers up to God.
But the child kneels alone within the shrine
Of his own hands, and over his bent head
He holds his sanctity; the ultimate
Lodges in little compass as he prays.

## VERNON WATKINS

### *Song of the Gravesdropper*

HAVE I stolen away from the sun, from roadway, river and croft,
To a couch of broken bluebells, to a bed of violets soft?
Have I sought that peace of the graves, whose silence transfigures the sky?
Have I tried to deny death, which none can deny?

Have I said to the stone in the churchyard: " You guard her, but she is not here "
Touching the root of the yew, and the leaf, in the quick of the year,
Of a primrose hardly breathing, so sunk in the shade of the cwm?
Have I found my way to the width and hush of the tomb?

I have followed this wall of lichens that drops from the sun to a bed
Of soft and intricate grasses; and here I talked with the dead.
I have buried my eyes in the grass, deep, deep; but I saw through a crack.
What is the dazzling voice that summons me back?

Is it the sunflower's god from the height who questions me now,
Crowning tree above tree, with green upon every bough:
" What would you learn or decipher, lost under sunlight and song?
Over what words do you bend? For what do you long? "

I long for one thing alone, for a lamp in a body that's cold,
And still I am bound to that darkness forsaken, the damp and the mould.
Nothing, nothing I learned from the letters and hush of the tombs,
But the grass is bent where I stood, broken the blooms.

## HENRY TREECE

### *Lonely Child*

THE child in the breathless high-walled garden still
Walks at dusk, inventing gay companions.
In dreams the playful voices shatter, high
Against stuccoed pediment; and rosemary
And thyme stifle with scent the creeping fear
That when the sun shines tomorrow, garden-paths
And ivied summer arbours will be bare
Of sunny limbs, that voices will be still.
The lonely child fondles the timeless lichen,
Squeezes the garden mint and smells the past;
In the dark places where the poplars stand,
Thrush ends his song and seeks a friendly nest.

## MAURICE CARPENTER

### *The Descent of Chatterton*

COMMERCE was come. The hammers of Gehenna
Heavy upon the temples. Masts were higher
Than the delicate spire washed in Saint Elmo's fire.
In that dark century no child was born:
Families grew on flower-beds and all fathers
Faded like flowers before they dropped their pollen.
The soil was sour. All beauty was aborted.

He went down the stone steps into the crypt
A pale boy. He had heard marvellous music
Branching and burgeoning from the earth of the past,
Caught an echo of the tall girl he had never seen,
Felt the flick of a shadow, the warm shadow
Of the wife he had never married. The tongue of the time
Had stung her. Iridiscent wells had poisoned
Her sparkling artesian breasts. She had died,
And the child Chatterton, though he knew and loved his mother,
Had never seen the other. An iron chest
Bulged with rumpled parchments. In niches along the wall
Tubers and corms, rhizomes, bulbs and roots
Turned over, sighing. The scent of their sleep
Was heavy and sweet as earth. The folded gardens
And plants in their carved coffins did not terrify
For all his song lay curled in them. He passed
Onward, and came to a stone ante-room
Like a hermit's cell. The ghost in the golden robe
Rose, Thomas Rowley? with the face of his father
And spoke to him softly. " I am no celibate,
My name is Edmund Spenser. You are my son
Called Peregrine. Your stanzas shall be elaborate,
Baroque and beautiful. Cold coupled courtiers no more.
Tune your lute to the turn of the time, try out
Your instrument of language, speak
To the echo in the corridor. She may hear
And come to your seeking childhood". Trembling
The boy stood up and spoke to the microphone
For all the centuries. He rang down the long room :

" O Truth, immortal daughter of the skies,
Fill out the hood of Rowley as he walks

With Lydgate through my mind. The giants rise
Big as a roaring wind and stoop to talk
Soft to a child of change who trembles as he lies
On the knife edge of the century. The prize
Glows on a branch in this Hesperides
Of gathering shadows. My Adam shall devise
Dances, but arsenic-garlanded, my face
Grow pale and green to haunt your consciences."

A door opened and a girl glowed
A moment in the green light of the garden,
Bright line of profile, breast pencilled silver
Upon the metal of his mind. He took one step.
The door closed with a clop. The dark hit him
Like a fist out of a tunnel. He turned to the priest.

Rowley threw back his hood. " Well done," he said.
" You are my son, and now you have seen her
For a long moment, pass down this corridor
Into the Merchant dust of Bedminster. Pass under
The masts of darkness, climb up Brandon hill
And give this parchment to the gilded angel
Who overlooks the town. O'Connor once
Offered his charter to the people from
That spot : six points of suffrage now forgotten."

He climbed the hill to the tall gilded figure
Stiff-winged and solid. No eyelid flickered.
He offered the parchment. He saw the gold
Peel off in strips from the iron finger pointing
Downward to the town. He followed, found
Bright roofs of arsenic in metallic dark
Virid and sinister. In a timbered doorway
The girl, disgusted, turned her face away.
He took a plane to London. There he lay
Distracted in a garret, crying " Waste,
My friends, that you hate, has eaten me,
And the real world still lies in that muniment room
Laid away in rows of spoken gold, the tree
Is withered on Brandon hill, and he whom
I conjured has neither lived, nor spoken, nor come home."

A counting house lifts its head on a city site.
A man with a carriage spits in the bowl of blood
Put for the poor. A maniac with a spanner
Is running amok with a cry of splintered wood
In the forest of engines. Beacons burn
Bright on the metal hills. A man behind a banner
Roars against the angry sky and bangs
His fist with a cross. But, my unhappy love,
You lie in your green corn, and I discern
The tremor in the stone as you turn over.

## ERIC NIXON

### *The Mystic*

O THE years I have watched him pass
lightly the long green oblong fields,
the ornamental manuscript of grass,
seeking peace as the daylight yields.

He was lost in the meadows of thought
long evenings ago, like the soft fieldmouse
in the folds of the earth, when he sought
a lonely peace and a lonely house.

He read the mappemondes of stone
grained on the rambling western walls
whose ancient fells he walked alone
under the anxious curlew calls.

The sun-spoked woods he knew
the Judas thorns and jewelled briar
and how each evening golden grew
the burning echoes of autumnal fire.

At twilight he'd wait on the lip of the fell
the sleep of the sun and the pale moonrise,
the shadowed valley and the evening bell
crying to the darkening skies.

In such hours his heart was still
and noiseless as the daylight birds
and within this silence he searched until,
his was the thought beyond all words.

Now in the valley watch him dream
his silence through the living land
or on the fell when the curlews scream
quieten their fear with a lift of his hand.

## PHOEBE HESKETH

### *The Vigilant Swan*

NOW the swan is coiled like a shell in sleep,
Yet vigilant below the bridge, can you
Look back across the curving years and keep
One thought alive in debris floating through
The arch of time towards the sorting sea?
Or does your mind sail onward and away
From actions which have shaped you as you are
Until tomorrow blots out yesterday?
Can you, identified with outward things,
Make telescopic eyes convince the world
That stars are dead, and symmetry of wings
Is feathered steel mechanically unfurled?

Or do you lean across the parapet
Till the crawling river races in your blood,
Impetuous and stinging with regret
For truth that glimmers from a bed of mud?

Where is the halfpenny you flung for luck
To unknown deeps from your expectant hand?
Ah, Fate went roaring by and left the suck
Of tide on stone to grind it into sand.

Now like the swan you live, appearing blind,
With shuttered eye towards the straining town,
But the eye that sees, though buried deep in down,
Is bared to constellations of the mind.

## JUDAH M. TURKAT

*Something of a Challenge*

ALL this,
in the course of time:
bay leaf,
palm ripple.
Winter or summer
the same dark question
that spreads venum
in the sun:
the glint of bronze hair,
the serpent smile.
Say it might be
a wild swan singing
to a hyacinth
or a crimson god swimming
in sacred waters.
It might even be
the ghost of a snow-king
forsaking his mountain peak
to wait for you
but you
you are beyond all this
as are the katha flowers
on a Phrygian isle.

## CLIFFORD DYMENT

*Letter to a Friend*

I WISH I could write to you happily, for I
Approve felicities, but I am shut
In a convent of my own building where I am a Prior
Of puzzled faith, and I would break out—

Not into the fields, secure in their strict law,
But into towns, where there's disorder, work, and fun:
I would join the boozy brotherhood of the bar,
And pick up the honey who smiles at me in the train,

Then, perhaps, forgetting a lot, I should be able
To communicate my exultation and my grief
That there should be so much ecstasy in living
And pain also that living is so brief—

And there is so much to enjoy and so little time
To take the wisdom only time can yield:
The courage to be ruthless, yet not to forget
How to be tender with primrose and child.

The truth is difficult for many of us to hear
And happy are some with a party line or a myth—
But people must come before party, and people
Are landmines under even the stoutest faith.

It seems so simple, to look within and ask
People to love one another, to live
For the general good and to cease building
An ever more awful empire of self love.

But the simple things, like home and songs,
Are only simple when attained:
The wish in us is like a blind man at a fair
Who can only progress by touch and sound:

Though he taps the fences, questions, twists and feints
In strenuous efforts of approach,
New obstacles baulk him every time
And the merry-go-round is always out of reach.

The fault is ours, and I know myself very well,
I who lie to live in a world of lies
And believe that the ego which speaks the lie
Must offer up its life for a world at peace.

And yet the ego is the necessary armament
Against self-interest and unannounced attack:
To disarm in our world of hate is folly,
To arm builds a tower that a butterfly could break.

That is the dilemma, and so I write to you
A gloomy watcher of the life I cherish,
Too much an admirer of man as he might be
To get along happily with man as he is.

## ROBERT THOMAS MOORE

### *Ecuador*

I WOULD not die, burdened with debt to you,
Without a tribute to your arrogant snow,
Without a verse, when colour and poncho flow
Down Inca highway flung above the blue.

Eyesight would dim, should I not praise you most
Of all the aliens who have fashioned words
For frozen craters, flaming hummingbirds
And morpho blue no lacquered sky can boast.

Strength leave my limbs, should I forget Sangay,
His icy daggers hung in cratered throat,
The three mile plunge from rim to Amazon moat,
Where cloudlets form and mushroom to the sky.

Memory default, gleams not white Antisana,
In dream of amber ice-cliffs at sunrise
Through maze of incandescent butterflies—
Even Time pauses to gauze and pleads *Mañana*!

## JUAN RODOLFO WILCOCK

### *Diego's Letter*

AH, you must read my tears, and know the love
I feel like omens of strange funeral birds.
I bear within my heart a doleful city,
In whose sad eyes are read past favours,
An absent glory and a trampled liberty.
It is she who lifts her yearning arms and comes,
Soft fleeting, to your side. Now in the season
When the dull spaces burst forth into flower
Of orange blossom and hydrangeas,
With all my senses captive, I await
A sign from Heaven to shake off these chains.
I dreamt the door stood open and you seemed

The Virgin on the threshold, or that sweet fruit
December offers to my lips, the Sun ;
What time the ships of night had slowly turned
Their sails towards the dawn. And you
Held out your hands to one who'd lived six days
With these suave phantoms. Then dawn overtook
The columns of sleep, plunging them in the blue-
Green terror of a rocky place and snakes
Which ever in my breast pursue their scaly
Assault, their emerald coils. Midday's transparent
Breath comes on me now in exile, joyless,
Unadorned. I soothe the hills in your absence
And drop upon the walls a tear which later breaks
Into the splendour of the earliest star.
When stillness, falling from the boughs, enshrouds with mist
And shadows, the serenity of Spring,
I shall come back, in fire like the north wind.
Even tomorrow the East shall light my steps
Towards Buenos Aires. Time already crumbles
With loud amazement in the dust. Conquering
Alexander and Octavian on his knees
Desire the rose there growing at your feet.
With me nocturnal birds, their rusty wings outspread,
And ghosts and tears, will fill your dreams
As if it were some antique tower, for aye. And we
will live eternal mourners, closed within
The flowery margins of the books of love.

*translated by* PATRICK ORPEN DUDGEON

## PAUL DEHN

### *Anniversary*

THIS was our earliest walk together
Who four years later stood
Loving each other equally
Under the same April weather
And the wild cherry like the ghost of a tree
Come back to haunt the wood.

## MARGARET CROSLAND

### *The Map*

(For Jules Supervielle).

HE makes the map of poetry's world
and here at corners of his heart
mermaids and lingering dolphins
watch the shapely frigates home.

He holds the coloured coat of arms
on mountains with an older name.
Latin is timely here, whose compass
measures out the mystic town.

An island lost beyond projection
where mountain-Spain and citied France
are mirage only, tempting
the traveller to a legend-sea.

Speaking with knights and gypsies there
he learns translation of the latitude,
the hidden jewelled stairs, the statues
lovelier than the stone-shod world.

A poet's country peopled with actors
more graceful and blond than ever dreamed-of,
who speak of flowers heard grow at midnight,
whose masks are silver, whose eyes pearl.

Their castle sharpens on the cliff.
Then slowly at morning, captained
for stranger and uncharted lands,
tall ships leave the rocky steps.

But he, the dream-geographer,
records their landfall on his mind.
He is the globe in the dark engraving,
facing the skull, the magic books.

## JOSEPH JOEL KEITH

### *Spotlighted*

SPOTLIGHTED by the bad and curious eye,
by the indifferent, and by the weak—
ashen and tense, the sitting criminal
awaits the accusation, sees nearby
one paid friend who will speak.

Minutes grow longer. Free and held men pass.
Soon he is up, obedient, as his name
hangs in the air a minute, caught and noosed,
tied to the pull of tautness, as the law's
long fingers point at shame.

Night-time, the paradox of strange far peace,
lends him her nearness, height and stars.
Day's men parade one moment: three in front rows;
accuser, juror—sharers of his guilt
the other side of bars.

## MADGE HALES

### *Winter Landscape*

HERE beauty lives in the pale snow
Smooth-scaling the rockery,
The lawn a shimmering undented plain
Throws lucent scintillations in mockery
Sunwards again.

In blue lengths of shadows the elms
Mount the air, each bough thick graved
With fleece laced in chequered black etched strip
To the curled edge where Aphrodite waved
The foaming whip.

And mountains lie like earthbound clouds,
Unresisting as a bride
Whose white flesh draws her lover the grey sky
To her great arms and the fields stretch wide,
Somnolent and shy.

# POETRY AND PAINTING

B. Evan Owen

CONTEMPORARY artists are primarily concerned with the transmission of sense experience through the medium of their craft and the process of creation is intensely subjective. Paul Klee has compared the growth of a work of art to the growth of a tree. From his study of the world around him and the ensuing psychological metamorphosis emerges a seed-thought which becomes the root, its fingers gripping tightly the rich compost of total experience. The invigorating, transforming sap travelling upwards through the artist, the trunk of the tree, guides the feeling tip of his loaded brush and the crown of the tree begins to grow into a full luxuriance. But even as the tree does not grow its crown " in the image of the root," the completed painting often bears little resemblance to the idea that gave it birth. " Madame, that is not a woman, it is a painting," said Matisse to a critical studio visitor. If it is the wish of the artist to reproduce exactly the object before his eyes, he had better use a camera than waste his efforts with brush and palette. It is this distinction which Herbert Read has called " the poetry and prose of painting," and the tree analogy could be applied to the creation of a poem with but little modification.

The completed poem is often as different from the seed-thought as the crown of the tree from its root, and a poem that can easily be translated into prose without any great loss had better be left unwritten. There is a vital difference, however, in the creation of a poem as compared to the creation of a picture. The tools of the painter are specialist equipment, but the tools of the poet are words, and words are the currency of every day commerce. The poet has, by choosing the medium of words (as if he could help it) to solve a problem which is not present in the other arts.

A poem, therefore, is more intellectual in content than a painting, and a painting has a greater intellectual content than a Sonata. It is a horizontal distinction and inevitably there will be poems that are only just poems and pictures that are almost music. Thus the work of Klee has been compared to the music of Gabriel Fauré and the compositions of Ben Nicholson have been equated with Chopin studies. It was more than a coincidence that the poets Apollinaire and Cendrars were the first champions of the young painter Marc Chagall when he arrived in Paris in 1910.

" To create reality, a poet must first have the force to kill it," wrote the Italian literary historian, De Sanctis, " But instantly the fragments draw together again, in love with each other, seeking one another, coming together with desire, with the obscure presentiment of the new life to which they are destined."

His analysis of the poetic process applies equally well to the fantastically charming compositions of Chagall, or, as Herbert Read has pointed out, to the paintings of Henri Matisse.

The only justification for a work of art, whether it is a poem or a painting, a piece of sculpture or a fugue, is in its uniqueness. A painting that can be adequately explained in words is a superfluity; a poem that succeeds only in evoking a visual image which might equally well have been painted is a waste of words. There is a deep and valuable relationship between poetry and painting, but it is a mistake to attempt indiscriminate assessment of the one in terms of the other. All poets cannot be painters in the manner of Blake, but every literary critic should have a full appreciation of the visual arts in his day, and every art critic should be something of a poet. Only thus can the dividing line between the two mediums be competently drawn, and only thus can the critic appreciate the absolute "rightness" of a work of art in its own particular medium. The most satisfying assessment of Van Gogh's painting, to my mind, has come from the pen of a French poet, the late Antonin Artaud. Of the wild, whirling, darkly foreboding *Crows on the Cornfield*, painted just before the painter's tragic death, Artaud writes: " . . . . . I hear the crows' wings beating loud cymbal strokes above an earth whose flood, as it seems, Van Gogh will no longer be able to contain."

From William Blake, poet and painter, stem the main streams in modern art and poetry. To Dylan Thomas via Lawrence and Hopkins. To Graham Sutherland via Samuel Palmer and Turner.

> " In the beginning was the mounting fire
> That set alight the weathers from a spark,
> A three-eyed, red-eyed spark, blunt as a flower;
> Life rose and spouted from the rolling seas,
> Burst in the roots, pumped from the earth and rock
> The secret oils that drive the grass."

I found the early poetry of Dylan Thomas, from which these few lines have been taken, accessible from the start, because of my familiarity with the work of Graham Sutherland. The final phase in the development of Paul Nash was well within my comprehension for I already loved the poetry of David Gascoyne. There is Gascoyne's:

" Once more the earth, its buried spirit stirred,
Aspired towards the Summer's splendid bursting
And an illustrious death."

and there is the haunting mystery of Nash's *Sunset Flower*. Through the arid landscape of Giorgio de Chirico's *Waste Land* stride the apocalyptic inhabitants of Henry Moore's sub-universe.

The poetry, the painting, the engraving of William Blake, were facets of the same gem, and to understand fully the implications of his art they must be considered together. His was a unique mastery and in him poetry and painting flowed together towards the revealing synthesis of his work. The world has yet to know a triple genius, a greater Leonardo Vinci, who can compound from his experience the sublime in painting, poetry and music.

Our post-war world abounds in competent poets, painters and sculptors. It is certain that here in Britain we have never known such a multitude of sincere and skilful poets. In painting, after a long supremacy, the School of Paris has become a revered chapter in art history and British painters are building the foundations of a new and very considerable School of London. There is indeed a high level of competence, but it is a level without any pinnacles of genius among the younger poets and painters. The sovereignty of T. S. Eliot has received no serious challenge from any poet under forty years of age ; no painter in the world can approach the mastery of the ageing Picasso ; no sculptor can match the peculiar genius of Henry Moore. The foundations are solidly established, but there are no materials for the towers.

" What is the price of experience? do men buy it for a song?
Or wisdom for a dance in the street? No, it is bought with the price
Of all that a man hath, his house, his wife, his children.
Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none comes to buy,
And in the wither'd field where the farmer plows for bread in vain."

We are able to answer Blake's questioning in clear and decisive terms, for we have paid in full the terrible price of experience. It may be that the cosmic nature of experience undreamed of by the eighteenth century poet has made immediate assimilation impossible, for we cannot indicate any contemporary in whose work there may be enshrined the myth of our atom age. The times are ripe for another

flowering of genius, for another Blake who must be in his individual universality an interpreter of his age in poetry, painting and music. Only then shall we be able to say with Litvinoff:

> " Out of the whirlpool of storm,
> the salt agony of many oceans,
> and the fiery torture of the burning sun,
> will come the dream's renewal—
> that unknown continent,
> that innocence of history,
> that clear, unravened sky."

## OXFORD AND AFTER

JOHN WAIN

*Oxford Poetry* 1948: edited by Arthur Boyars and Barry Harmer (Basil Blackwell, 3s. 6d.)

THERE are, on the face of it, two opinions it is possible to hold about undergraduate poetry. One is that poetry written by very young men is specially interesting in itself, that the years between eighteen and twenty-five are poetical years, in which the mind is fresh and song flows naturally; and that even those writers who will later decide that they were not destined to be poets, and will become novelists and critics (Aldous Huxley, Peter Quennell) have an early 'poetic period' in which good verse is possible to them. The other is that such poetry is interesting chiefly as an index to contemporary taste; necessarily derivative, it shows which of the older poets is exerting the most influence; that, in a word, it is valuable not as a sign of what is being written but of what is being read. The first alternative is more pleasant to believe in, but the facts seem to point the other way. The earliest extant work even of great poets is usually thin and imitative; and so I myself hold the second view.

If this sounds pessimistic, let me say at once that I always find *Oxford Poetry* enthralling. There are more ways than one in which poetry can claim our attention, and if it is an indication of current trends, that makes it, not less valuable, but more. And I must fairly admit that every now and then these anthologies bring to light a talent about which there can be no two opinions. William Empson, after

all, contributed a poem to *Cambridge Poetry* 1929 which filtered, seven years later, into *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse.*

Anyway, in this case the problem is not so simple as I have made it sound, for the editors are careful to tell us that their contributors vary in age from 19 to 31, and as they give us no biographical data, the critic may find himself commending the first fruits of promise in a poet who has been writing for a dozen years. Altogether a difficult situation. Some of these names, of course, are familiar; Arthur Boyars, Ian Davie, Kingsley Amis, have all published with The Fortune Press and elsewhere; William J. Smith has published a volume in America which was, I remember, well reviewed by critics whose brows are impeccably high; while a fair acquaintance with the "Little Magazines" has made me familiar with the work of several more. But presumably the editors suppressed their contributors' birth-certificates and bibliographies in the hope of compelling the reader to treat these poems simply as poems, and this is what I must do.

It should be said, to start with, that the book is not *easy* reading. Concentration, and the omission of the merely helpful or explanatory phrase, seems to everyone's aim. On the other hand, there is none of the fiercely intellectual attitude of the outmoded Thirties. Impressions, rather than ideas, are the material for these poems. A year ago Lord David Cecil wrote in his Foreword to *Oxford Poetry* 1947: "The poets of the Thirties were gifted but thwarted. The flow of their inspiration was clogged all too often by much intractable material, drawn from politics, sociology, psychology, which they felt bound . . . . to force willy-nilly into their verse. Their manner, too, tended to be dessicated and over-intellectualised. Not so the Oxford poets today." It is only fair to add that good poems were written even by these dessicated and over-intellectualised writers, that when the best poems of this country come to be collected they will include Ransom's *The Equilibrists*, Empson's *This Last Pain* and Graves's *Saint*, all of which are essentially intellectual poems. You cannot exclude ideas from your verse; if they are not explicit they will be implicit (Mr. Hamburger's *Consider Oedipus* in this collection is a good example of the *controlled* implicit idea). Still, Lord David was right; the Thirties are dead in Oxford. If these poems are difficult it is because they are compressed, because language is used to cram the maximum of impressions, cadence and atmosphere, into a few lines. If we wanted to tie a label round these poets (and it is sometimes useful) we could say that they were all Symbolists.

And all Romantics. I have combed the book for evidences of what used to be called " contemporary sensibility," but there are almost none. Pylons, nylons, pistons, cisterns, all are banished. What is more, hardly a single poem is about *ugliness*. Even Mr. John Hewish's *Suburban Children*, which presents a dismal scene, is flooded with pity and therefore with beauty; and most of the poems are on the thorough-going romantic subjects. No less than three are on classical Greek themes, treated in a romantic vein; one on Salamnbo; one on T. E. Lawrence; others about the more emotional aspects of Sacred History; and while only one poet has taken the countryside as his ostensible theme, Nature—as understood by poets from Wordsworth to Rimbaud—supplies about two-thirds of the imagery in the book. And if the Thirties poets are no longer potent, there are signs of an even more far-reaching emancipation: not one of these thirty-five poets seems anxious to write like Mr. Eliot. I had long suspected that the echo of his voice was growing fainter, and this proves it.

And so the lesson of this book is that English poetry has now thoroughly learnt the lessons of modernism, the lessons of Pound, Eliot, Laforgue, Rilke, Valery and the rest, and learnt them so thoroughly that a new return to beauty and melody is possible within the framework. Unimpressed by recent efforts to exhume Tennyson, more than dubious about Shelley and Swinburne, young poets are nevertheless aiming frankly at beauty. And they are getting there. Take this poem by Mr. P. A. T. O'Donnell, which I quote, not because it is necessarily the best in the book but because it is very short:

*Spell*

" Furled fall, lemon and rust, in shoals to sleep
In the sun's pools, the legions of the leaves.
False, this deciduous peace.

Autumnal consummation, like a sigh
Shaping the heart for rest, an amber draught,
Solves the sharp thoughts that tease."

This kind of thing marks a genuine renascence. Of course, the book has its crop of failures, but they are few; and if it is true that not every contributor has attained the precision and solidity of Mr. Amis, or the richness of Mr. Boyars, or the poignancy of Mr. Haro Hodson, it is also true that this anthology sets a new standard, not only for Oxford, but for young poets everywhere.

# LOVE POETRY TODAY

Ellode Collins

THE cosmology of emotion changes with that of the universe, but the foundation remains the same. At the present time it would almost seem that we had inscribed a circle, so near are we in many ways to either the Elizabethan or Metaphysical concept of love poetry. The work of many writers today contains elements of both, the Elizabethan richness and vigour, combined with the tautness and plangency of the Metaphysicals. There is a kind of ruthlessness and tenderness, a Shakespearian perception of not only the thing itself, but of the shadow which it casts behind. The transience of life and emotion and the acceptance of the fact that even a great love may die, haunted Elizabethan poems. Auden wrote:

> "Lay your sleeping head, my love,
> Human on my faithless arm:
> Time and fevers burn away
> Individual beauty from
> Thoughtful children, and the grave
> Proves the child ephemeral."

That quality of theme, love is transient, love is transcendent, so familiar in Elizabethan verse, is also noticeably prevalent in modern work. On fidelity Alun Lewis has written:

> "If I should go away,
> Beloved, do not say
> 'He has forgotten me'
> For you abide,
> A singing rib within my dreaming side,
> You always stay."

There is, too, an Old English lustiness in the purely sensuous aspect. In the best work of the modern poets this, like that of the Elizabethans, has a kind of counterpoint effect, the spiritual level moving on a parallel with the physical. *Like any Falling Star* by Nicholas Moore is an example. It has a gust and flare as though the darker corners of the intellect were lit momentarily by the light of the emotions. A delight in the beauty of the body for its own sake, as well as, not merely as, a medium for the spiritual qualities, marks

another similarity, but here, in many modern poems there is a cleavage. When the Elizabethans spoke of the pain of love (allowing for stylisation) there was a queer lack of depth: one feels that the wounds inflicted were not emotionally mortal. In modern poetry the frustration and sorrow are often uncomfortably real. We are nearer to the Metaphysicals here. They show the twisted nerve and the shrieking heart-string. The bareness and sinuousness of their texture possesses greater force for conveying emotional impact than that of the Elizabethans. There is this stripped and skeletal quality in Terence Tiller's *The Acid of the Heart* with its implication of sterility of emotion and death in life. While Sidney Keyes wrote, in *The Uncreated Images*, " There is no speech to tell the shape of love. Nor any but the wounded eye to see it."

A cynical, sadly disillusioned air pervades a great deal of modern poetry now; also there is a fearlessness, an almost brutal desire to see the facts as they are. Psychology has provided a new view-point, and strangely enough seems to have been one of the main things conducive to bringing poetry round full cycle to the Elizabethan broadness, what was one done by instinct has now been done by a widening of the knowledge of the impulses of the subconscious. A branch of love-poetry that has become extinct is the light and fanciful. There is no modern counterpart of Herrick's *Julie* poems, nor do young poets write lyrics similar in mood to Tennyson's *Airy, Fairy Lilian*, *Isabel*, or *Madeline*. The super-chivalrous attitude is dead, and if the poet today does not write of love seriously, it is usually with a hard-boiled cynicism such as Louis MacNeice in *The Libertine*. Or as Eliot, who parodied Goldsmith's *When Lovely Woman Stoops to Folly*:

> " When lovely woman stoops to folly and
> Paces about her room again, alone,
> She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
> And puts a record on the gramophone."

The swing back from such extraordinary pomposity as Tennyson's "Revered Isobel, the crown, the head, the stately flower of female fortitude," is complete, Swinburne being one of those largely responsible for exploding the myth of the domesticated-woman-angel. His *Delores*, with its rather decadent eroticism, provoked a furore. Woman, from being a saint, became a toy, a siren with a "Red mouth like a venomous flower,"; *The Yellow Book* brought the " purple patch " and the exploitation of " Sin." Dowson was writing *Cynara*. The goddess was acknowledged to have feet of flesh, if not of clay. But the violent over-emphasis necessary to revolution did not last

long, love poetry swung to a middle course, and affected by the social emancipation of woman has slowly widened in concept until it has something of the Elizabethan warmth and colour, allied to a contra-movement of disintegration and a poignant searching for a complete and valid synthesis of life, reminiscent of Donne and the Metaphysical poets. Most modern love poems are wars between lover and lover, or lover and himself or uncontrollable forces. They are static only as a lull in the storm is static. They are often vivid, moving and curiously out of fashion. But always, one opens the latest magazine of verse, or a new collection by a young poet, " And speaking of love are the voices that come from the darkness "— the line is Edith Sitwell's.

## LABOUR BY SINGING LIGHT

### Charles Orwell

THE poetry of Dylan Thomas approximates more closely to the realm of unmediated experience than does that of any of his contemporaries. Therein lies its uniqueness. Reading his poems, one has the feeling that the poet is attempting to reproduce in language the rich profusion of discrete sensations and phenomena which form the raw material for the mind's generalising activity. This, I think, explains also the prevalence of so many images remembered from childhood, the time of life in which every new aspect of experience impinges on the senses in a clear, startling and colourful way, adding to the rich store of memory which the later generalising activity reduces to proportion and sequence. Thus, we get lines like these :

> " Why silk is soft and the stone wounds
> The child shall question all his days,
> Why night-time rain and the breast's blood
> Both quench his thirst he'll have a black reply."

The translation of the unconscious into language, which is by its nature the medium of communicating the general, that is, the product of the conscious mind, is bound to be immensely difficult and only partially successful. One is operating on the level of the unspeakable. Hence, overt statement, syntax, proportion and particularisation are absolutely necessary to communicate the experience,

and are, at the same time, factors combining to limit, scale down and modify the experience itself. So it is that the poetry of Dylan Thomas abounds in fantastic imagery, demanding to the full our willing suspension of disbelief, and held together not so much by a logic of its own, but rather by the intention of the poet to externalise completely :

> " How soon the servant sun
> (Sir Morrow mark)
> Can time unriddle, and the cupboard stone
> (Fog has a bone
> He'll trumpet into meat)
> Unshelve that all my gristles have a gown
> And the naked egg stand straight, . . . ."

But unmediated experience is necessarily incomplete, so one cannot simply dissect a poem of Dylan Thomas', as one might parse a sentence, in the hope of discovering " what it means." What is called for is the Cartesian effort to think about nothing at all, and then to read and re-read the poem ; giving it time to circulate through the brain. Then one gets a " feeling." I find that the emotions evoked by Dylan Thomas' poetry are compassion, poignancy and a nostalgia for the things of childhood. But it is not easy to retail the experience communicated by much of it. " It is impossible to say just what I mean." Nevertheless, the immediacy of the imagery, the queer syntax and the hypnotic rhythm conspire to make the emotion deep and durable. Who can forget :

> " Begin
> With singing
> Sing
> Darkness kindled back into beginning
> When the caught tongue nodded blind.
> A star was broken
> Into the centuries of the child
> Myselves grieve now, and miracles cannot atone."

The poet writes : " I have been told to reason by the heart," and his poetry makes it quite clear that even when he works with the articulate consciousness he prefers emotions to intellectual abstractions. His themes are simple and simply dealt with : death, birth and love, localised and experienced. The impact is direct and effective in a way that the work of so many of his contemporaries is not. The simplicity, however, is often more apparent than real, since the

poet obtains his effects by an extremely delicate fusion of literary and colloquial English, and the danger of bathos and absurdity attending it has been the undoing of more than one talented poet. For example, when Auden writes :

> " O plunge your hands in water,
> Plunge them in up to the wrist :
> Stare, stare in the basin
> And wonder what you've missed."

there arises in the reader a blasphemous urge to murmur, " the soap, the soap." But observe the last two stanzas of *Paper and Sticks*. Here the character is one taken from " low life," but whereas such characters have too often served as supernumaries and comic reliefs in English literature, Dylan Thomas enters completely into the mood and situation and creates a tragedy out of the feelings of " one of the low," from whom alas, assurance has fled. It is interesting to note that whenever T. S. Eliot speaks of the poor, it is always in the accents of Puritanical disgust. The typist, her lover, the " small house-agent's clerk with one bold stare," the women in the public house, and the prostitute in the doorway, equally receive his cold censure. Dylan Thomas eschews such theological judgments and shows the poor to be human, which is a tribute to his own humanity.

Yet Thomas is not a political or social poet. Nowhere in his poetry do you find political partisanship, although he does express solidarity with the suffering and alive, as in *In my craft or sullen art*. And his condemnation of the social barbarism we inhabit is all the more certain for its brevity :

> " Under the skysigns they who have no arms
> Have cleanest hands . . . . "

It is difficult to say whether he accepts Christianity as an interpretation of our existence, but the poem beginning " Altarwise by owl-light in the half-way house," ten sections of which were published in *Twenty-Five Poems*, suggests an inclination to do so, and a movement away from the natural religion of his earlier work, typified in the lines :

> " The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
> Drives my green age ; that blasts the roots of trees
> Is my destroyer.
> And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
> My youth is bent by the same wintry fever."

## REVIEWS

*Stone in the Midst, and Poems* : Patric Dickinson (Methuen, 7s. 6d.).
*The Mirror* : Leonard Clark (Allan Wingate, 6s. od.).
*Not as a Refuge* : Alan Rook (Lindsay Drummond, 5s. od.).
*Gates of Beauty and Death* : C. Busby Smith (Fortune Press, 6s. od.).
*Where Oxen Lay* : Stanley Stokes (G. T. Foulis & Co., Ltd. 6s. od.).

THE instinct for a theatrically effective situation can exist only where there exists also an intimate knowledge of the theatre itself. That is why the closing of the English theatres in 1642 has had so paralysing effect on our poetic drama. For whereas before that time poets had worked within the theatre's orbit, creating a tradition of living drama the vehicle of which was an increasingly flexible verse, the tradition was broken under the Long Parliament—and without revival at or since the Restoration.

Hence the difficulties under which poetry labours now that, led by T. S. Eliot, it is moving out once more into the dramatic terrain. For it is not a question only of the poet's powers *qua* poet. Were that all, Eliot would already have achieved full conquest, whereas in fact much of his deepest thought is neither " susceptible to theatre" nor reinforced by theatrical action adequate to carry it over. More is needed ; a new tradition, a new integration of the estranged arts.

In *Stone in the Midst*, Patric Dickinson attacks his problems courageously. The setting is a conquered and occupied England, the protagonists a family engaged on resistance in opposition to the totalitarian overlords whose oppression broods over the play though their sole representative within its structure is the district gauleiter. Dickinson's powers are manifested in his transference of these localised embodiments of universality into the domain of essential drama, where a slice of life is seen as Life itself ; for Rye and its marshlands become " the wilderness of this world," the Winter family and their dependants are Everyman warring against Fate, against Man's lower self and his self-created Frankenstein. But it is questionable whether great tragedy can ever come out of a contemporary situation ; and the Aristotelian catharsis has, one feels, missed attainment here, however narrowly.

It is characteristic of the new dramatic poetry that its verse-form should be rough-hewn and its rhythm-structure loose and experimental. *Stone in the Midst* does not escape these defects but it is

authentic poetry none the less, and of a high order. To quote would be to tear from their context lines which could not but lose by isolation—a disability which is imposed also by the poems included in the volume.

In the early 1930's, that lance-breaking second phase of modern poetry's development, the tendency was to use verse as a political weapon and man's need of reintegration was conceived in political terms. With Leonard Clark reintegration is seen as spiritual, and spiritual rather than intellectual is the isolation characteristic of his work.

He is grimly clear-visioned, but assurance repeatedly breaks through —as in *Ecce Mors*, a poem in the mood of Donne :

> " I saw Death stumble forth
> Crowned with a wreath of plaited thorn,
> Carrying a cross."

As Mr. Walter de la Mare says in his introduction to *The Mirror*, an insuperable hindrance to writing about poetry is that one must use the " alien tongue " of prose. I will hazard a dangerous analogy and say that much of Clark's poetry, distinguished as it is by austere imagery and a sense of suffusion by supramundane light, invites comparison with the mystical painting of El Greco ; but in the last resort I can do no more than praise inadequately this book by a significant poet.

Admitting—and how ruefully—Mr. de la Mare's dictum, the further admission is demanded that in *Not as a Refuge* Alan Rook has written about poetry with a discernment that will enhance his existing reputation. He sees the poetic stigmata as acceptance, loneliness, idleness, selfishness. " Loneliness " implies that liberation of the subconscious expressed by Yeats in *Byzantium*. "Idleness" is the Wordsworthian " wise passiveness." Rook's toughest problem is the reconciliation of selfishness, as an artistic necessity, with the obligation of fellowship and those contacts with humanity that are " the fiercest and most fruitful sources" of the poet's strength. But he achieves a difficult synthesis, and the book—it tends to be repetitive and could have been much less diffuse—repays close reading.

If *The Mirror* suggests painting, with C. Busby Smith the musical analogy is inescapable ; in *Gates of Beauty and Death* one finds cadences reminiscent of the drifting, "horizontal" music of Delius. In this poet's work the influence of Keats is very marked, and of Hopkins also (not surprisingly, since Hopkins himself was influenced by Keats). Busby Smith is a Romantic poet. His romanticism tends to cloy and runs occasionally to lushness ; but allowing for these

faults of which one hopes time will cure him, he writes authentic poetry of which *Four Lenten Moods* and the perhaps over-long *Poem for Autumn* are the best examples in the book.

To call Stanley Stokes' group of Christmas poems naïve is to imply no disparagement. They are not high poetry but imagination emblazons them with the blues, reds and gold-leaf of medieval manuscripts, and in that setting they are quite at home.

MICHAEL REDGROVE.

*The Freedom of Poetry* : Derek Stanford (Falcon Press, 8s. 6d.).

IN his introduction to *The Freedom of Poetry*, a collection of essays on the work of ten modern poets, Mr. Derek Stanford deprecates the growing tendency of literary critics to base their assessment upon political and sociological values (" judgment of the long-term message of art in the speech of short-term policies"), and elaborates upon the conditions necessary to the unrestricted creation of poetry. If the poet—or artist—is to make any useful contribution to the cultural development of society, he must be permitted to evolve his own medium of expression and to choose his own material; what is more important, he must be free to go where the organic compulsion of his work urges him. As Stephen Spender has said: " . . . . . the originality of a poet lies first and last in the audacity of being which permits him to be true to what he perceives, and to his own nature."

Having established the soundness of his argument, Mr. Stanford attempts, in the essays that follow, " to bring home a realisation of certain attitudes beginning to reach articulation point in works of contemporary literature." Whilst there can be no doubt that he has achieved his modest objective, one feels that if a more critical approach to the work of some of these poets had been adopted, his readers might have been able to determine whether or not the "attitudes" concerned have served to strengthen or improve the quality of the poetry in any way. For, as he admits, when poetry is being considered it is the treatment not the attitude which counts.

The poets whose work has been chosen for examination are Sidney Keyes, David Gascoyne, Lawrence Durrell, Nicholas Moore, Norman Nicholson, Wrey Gardiner, Kathleen Raine, Ruthven Todd, and Anne Ridler. In the light of Mr. Stanford's comments upon their

intentions and accomplishments it is difficult to understand why the essays on one or two of the poets have been included, or why he should prefer these poets to others, say Vernon Watkins, John Heath-Stubbs or Laurie Lee. After he has so perspicuously presented the case for the autonomous validity of poetry, it is not unreasonable on the part of the reader to anticipate that, as a result of his studies, he would be competent to select those " attitudes " most deserving consideration in their effect upon poetry. It is a little surprising when he reaches the conclusion, however logical to his line of thought, that " . . . . for one like Ruthven Todd . . . biography and fiction would seem to offer most," thereby implying that poetry is not, after all, the most suitable medium for Ruthven Todd.

But I do not wish to give a false impression. The defects are minor ones in an interesting and cogently-written book which will certainly be of value to all who have lost touch with recent developments. It might, to good purpose, be prescribed for those who still find obscurity a barrier in modern poetry, for, while discussing the ideas of particular poets, Mr. Stanford succeeds, unintentionally, in opening the way to an understanding of contemporary writing in general. He possesses a light but nevertheless pertinent manner, and his analytical method enables him to probe beneath the surface in his interpretation and—when he does not burke the real issues, as he does, very subtly, at times—to pronounce authoritative judgments. The essays on Keyes, Durrell and Kathleen Raine are illuminating and those on Gascoyne and Comfort quite outstanding in their way.

HOWARD SERGEANT

*The Lady with the Unicorn*: Vernon Watkins (Faber, 8s. 6d.).

IT is always a pleasant change to feel able to accept the claims on the jacket-cover, and in Mr. Watkins' new volume Fabers have been modest in stating " Mr. Watkins has won his considerable reputation with a minimum of output." I believe that in these days a large output is rarely compatible with good poetry, and that many poets write too much, or at least, publish too much ; Mr. Watkins, we are told, is " more inclined to revise or to discard, than to publish."

The result is an important collection of poems. The immediate fascination is, I think, the individuality of idiom. It has been said that there is a similarity in his work to Dylan Thomas, but I think this similarity exists naturally in the common regional roots of the two poets; the influence of Hopkins is much stronger, and is apparent in idiom, attitude and rhythms.

Mr. Watkins' poetry is memorable, and I think this is the result of a rare alliance between rhythm and theme, and also because the approach to most of the poems is through the senses. Colour, light, mood, texture, are the dimensions in which the poems move.

> " First joy through eye and limb
> Shoots upward."

expresses this quality.

I should like to stress the value of the varying rhythms in this volume. Many fine poets stand out in anthologies, but seem disappointing when published in a complete volume of their own, and the main reason is that when a particular rhythm lays hold of a poet, it cannot be easily shaken off, in which case the poems, however good, tend to monotony. Mr. Watkins has an excellent mastery of rhythms and in the religious theme—his strongest theme—these rhythms are especially well handled.

The importance of this poetry lies, in general, in the balance of its emotive with intellectual powers; this can be seen everywhere in the volume, often in individual lines, as for example:

> " Divorced from her darling, O at last no ropes are rung.
> Look on her face; mine eyes dazzle: she died young."

MURIEL SPARK.

*Lean Forward, Spring*: Phoebe Hesketh (Sidgwick & Jackson, 7s. 6d.).
*Shadows and Reflections:* John Wheatley (Fortune Press, 6s. od.).

BOTH Herbert Palmer and Siegfried Sassoon have found Miss Hesketh's book praiseworthy. This is not to say that, as a poet, she is without faults. She has her share, and some of them are howlers. For instance, she can write of a puma:

> " But blood is warm and life is strong;
> And jungle hunger knows no wrong."

And her *Skylark* is too similar to another poet's bird. There are other poems top-heavy with the influence of Edith Sitwell and Victoria Sackville-West, and in the background the shadows of Yeats, de la Mare, W. H. Davies, and Andrew Young can be discerned from time to time.

But what excellent shadows they are. And what a relief to discover that they have helped her to produce something definitely her own. She can describe a country " Where white inns cling like flowers on mountain passes," or a ladybird " bright as a blood-drop." Finally, she has one poem which is savagely and effectively in the romantic tradition :

> " Will you waken me still
> When my will to be loved is less than the will
> To sleep unpossessed ? . . .
> When my fingers are cold
> And I can no longer be soft to your mouth,
> Nor warm to your hold,
> Will you turn to me then?"

Mr. Wheatley writes in a quiet traditional manner with a competence which deserves some encouragement, but he lacks the depth of experience sounded by Miss Hesketh, and although his book has the better title, its contents are more easily forgotten than hers.

JOHN BAYLISS.

*Pillars of Remembrance* : John Redwood Anderson (Oxford University Press, 10s. 6d.).

*Songs* : Robert Payne (William Heinemann, 8s. 6d.).

USUALLY, when reading the poetry of Mr. Redwood Anderson, one is conscious of a tremendous universe about one—a cold inscrutability stretching endlessly—and of stars that are distant and severe : an immensity in which life can be of no consequence. And yet that is not quite Mr. Anderson's intention for he has, obviously, a profound faith in human destiny and a most reverent if unorthodox, conception of the purpose which guides all that is. It has been said that he is a pantheist, but I think that it would be much truer to interpret his religious outlook in terms of God as the impersonal Ultimate Reality (a view almost identical with Mr. Aldous Huxley's, but with the Christian terms of reference more honestly used).

About Mr. Anderson's *Paris Symphony* and *An Ascent* (for all their achievement) there was a bleakness that made one feel that somehow the poet could not be quite human. The present collection of poems, each of which is dedicated to some friend, corrects that impression, although it has not everywhere escaped his characteristic aloofness.

Although (as the publisher claims) these poems represent various facets of a single attitude to life, they neither reveal the poet, nor appeal to the reader with the dignified power that has distinguished his longer work. But if he displays his usual weakness of undue repetition (as in *One Afternoon*), or at times belabours the obvious, this volume, at least, is entirely redeemed by the poem *Lazarus* (to Bethel Jacobs) which is, without question, a masterpiece of its kind. Here he interprets the New Testament episode in a way that is at once realistic, penetrating in its portrayal of personality, and both warm and supremely memorable in its total impression. The poem is not "Christian" in any orthodox sense but if—as happened recently—I were asked to name ten of the most outstanding religious poems, I think that this might be included for its humanity as well as for its technical excellence.

Equally unorthodox in its approach to life, Mr. Robert Payne's philosophical outlook is far more complex, since he has been so much influenced by Oriental thought and habit. Apart from a novel on the life of Buddha, an anthology of Chinese poetry which he compiled, and a collection of his own poems, he has written many novels, short stories, and other works which reveal an uncommon literary versatility and breadth of scholarship, and indicate the extent to which he has absorbed the fundamentals—wise and bizarre—of Eastern life. He would undoubtedly be far better known but for the fact that most of his work has appeared under a variety of pseudonyms. Wherever war has swept in the last few years, he has never been far from the scene of battle—in Europe no less than in Asia and the Pacific—and his experience of suffering (and human endurance of it) must be singular, even among modern poets.

What voice, then, has emerged? It is a voice that is confident, steady, mature, sometimes vital and imaginative, often pedestrian, seldom intellectually feeble. Mr. Payne's principal weakness is, perhaps, the fact that he is *too* consistent. He maintains his poetry at a steady temperature, and so we never quite feel that exultant glow which attends our realisation of some brief significance, dramatically or piquantly achieved. Even *The Chinese Soldier* (a symbol of faith whose personal associations the poet emphasises in his notes) is a

brooding, patient and completely undynamic figure. He has, too, a most tedious habit of overworking a few favourite words such as "sun," "gold," and "green" ("gold" appears no less than fourteen times in one short poem) which detracts from an otherwise commendable craftsmanship. In these poems the shadow of Miss Sitwell's pen is often at hand but, although Mr. Payne has done nothing technically new, his work has a refreshing individuality. Many of these *Songs* are weighty with biblical, mythological, or historical allusion, and jostling with such figures as Perseus, Eurydice, and Dido—but those that I felt most worth re-reading are half a dozen short lyrics, simple in themselves, but warm with love in a most pristine and tender sense.

LIONEL MONTEITH.

## NOTICES

THE BRITISH POETRY ASSOCIATION (Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Wellington: President: Howard Sergeant) has recently been founded to encourage the appeciation, study and development of poetry, and to assist poets and poetry-lovers. Its functions include the organisation of public and private meetings; the publication of a quarterly magazine, *Poetry*, edited by Hardiman Scott; the holding of examinations, etc., in schools, colleges and other institutions; the annual selection and recommendation of the best "Books of the Year" (poetry); the founding of regional branches, for whom a special system has been devised to ensure an efficient administration without weakening the independence of local groups; the encouragement of regional culture; and liaison with poets, critics and editors in other countries. Subscription rates, to include receipt of the Association's magazine, are as follows: Members 15s. per annum, Associates £1 1s. 0d. per annum, and Fellows £2 2s. 0d. per annum. Application for the two latter grades can only be considered from those possessing the necessary qualifications and having been members for at least three months. Contributions to the magazine from members and non-members are invited and should be sent, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, to The Editor, The British Poetry Association, 21, High Street, Petersfield, Hants. *Poetry* may be obtained by non-members at a subscription rate of 8s. 4d. per annum, single copies 1s. 1d., post free. Full details can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, of the British Poetry Association, Mrs. Lallie Roberts, 89 Bowring Park Avenue, Liverpool, 16. Subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, Mrs. Evelyn G. Smith, 243 Blackmoor Drive, Liverpool, 12.